



Mississippi Works:
WIOA
Newsletter

Vol 1/Issue 3
Monday, June 29, 2015

This newsletter will provide weekly updates regarding Mississippi's WIOA planning process. Our state will be an early implementer and will submit a combined plan on September 1, 2015.

Have you downloaded the Mississippi Works app to your cellular device yet?

Mississippi has one of the most advanced online job systems in the country – Mississippi Works. Creating a free profile allows jobseekers to search for employment and view in real time comparisons between their skills and a job's requirements. Employers can post job openings at no cost, explore the labor market, and invite potential candidates to apply for an opening. Encourage your co-workers and employees to become familiar with this valuable resource: <http://www.mississippiworks.org/>.

Weekly Update:



Tee McCovey, left, and Mark Henry listen to members of the Employer Engagement Workgroup.

Employer Engagement Workgroup

The Employer Engagement Workgroup met Tuesday, June 23, to discuss a systematic approach to grow employer engagement and offer solutions on how to manage it. There are 55,000 employers across the state, and our current system is only engaged with 25% of them. The workgroup is committed to increasing employer involvement for Mississippi's workforce system of the future.

One idea is to assign each employer a project manager since most companies prefer one point of contact. To avoid duplication and to streamline the process, the committee decided to create a checklist of what information is needed from employers so everything is addressed at one time. The group decided to contact employers less, but in a more valuable way. And, instead of the workforce system telling employers what to do, the system needs to learn to listen first. Understanding the needs of the employer and referring them to the appropriate workforce partner and ultimately following through on their requests brings value and will increase credibility and participation. When employers experience the positive benefits of the workforce system, they will be more inclined to participate. In addition, employers who help the system should be given priority of service.

Another way to add value for both employers and workforce partners is tracking the engagement progress. Mississippi Works is one of the best workforce technologies in the country for jobseekers to be matched with employers. The group determined that our state needs a similar tracking mechanism for employer engagement also. With a variety of partners making cold calls and referrals, offering a single employer engagement technology will eliminate duplication and streamline these efforts. Workforce partners will be able to view data in a secure and centralized system to see who is involved with employer engagement. The benefits are endless. The state will have a better understanding of the needs of employers which, in turn, directly impacts how the state trains and directs jobseekers.

To be continuously effective, workforce partners recognize the need for ongoing professional development and training for themselves. The group decided that partners need to meet on a regular basis and provide cross-training of programs so all of the core agencies will have common knowledge of the services that are offered. This will enhance the referral process and keep the lines of communication open and the sharing of ideas ongoing. This group will identify a curriculum and/or certificate program as well as a coordinator to start this process.

Lastly, the group identified internships as a win-win for both the employer and jobseeker. Our Institutes of Higher Learning and Community Colleges are both working with MDES to match those looking for internships. There is an effort to not only give jobseekers work experience, but experience related to their field of study. An internship allows jobseekers an opportunity to demonstrate their ability and connect with potential employers.

Career Pathways and Assessment

It is vital that we look at strategies for improving access to middle-skill jobs in order to increase workforce participation at all levels. The Career Pathways and Assessment Group met to develop career-readiness plans that allow Mississippians to gain the necessary training and education to move directly into careers that are in-demand for the 21st Century. This process includes individualized education and training plans with multiple entry points and multiple exit points, ultimately tracking the jobseeker's progress through the system.

The group discussed strategies that include cross-program, non-duplicative assessments of education, skills, and assets. The group came to a consensus that the WorkKeys assessment would be the common measure for entry into the pathway. The WorkKeys will be a recognized credential for the State of Mississippi and will assess a jobseeker's trainability. To support this effort, there is also an individualized plan or case management system in place for every jobseeker in the workforce pipeline.

Next, there are three primary paths to training and education within the integrated pathway -- the essential skills pathway, the work pathway, or the career tech pathway. There are a variety of education and training options through these avenues. For instance, there are four week basic training courses that teach necessary or soft skills. If a jobseeker wants to continue down the training pipeline, they can receive certifications (i.e. WorkKeys) to improve their skills, which in turn, increases their pay. Understanding that the goal is to replace lower-skill, lower-paying jobs with higher-skill, higher-paying jobs as the jobseeker moves through the pathway.

Lastly, the group unanimously decided that everyone who exits these three pathways must be enrolled in Mississippi Works. We have one of the most advanced computer job matching systems in the country and the jobseeker can put their resume online and it's matched with an employer. Jobseekers can be matched by work experience, skills, location, etc. Under WIOA, the workforce system will be required to participate in the Mississippi Works system.

The statewide pathway model (see Figure 1 below) will guide jobseekers to aligned resources and support to help them find a job and increase Mississippi's workforce participation rate. The overarching goal of the state's workforce pathway is creating opportunities for our people to receive higher skills and higher wages as they progress through the workforce pipeline.

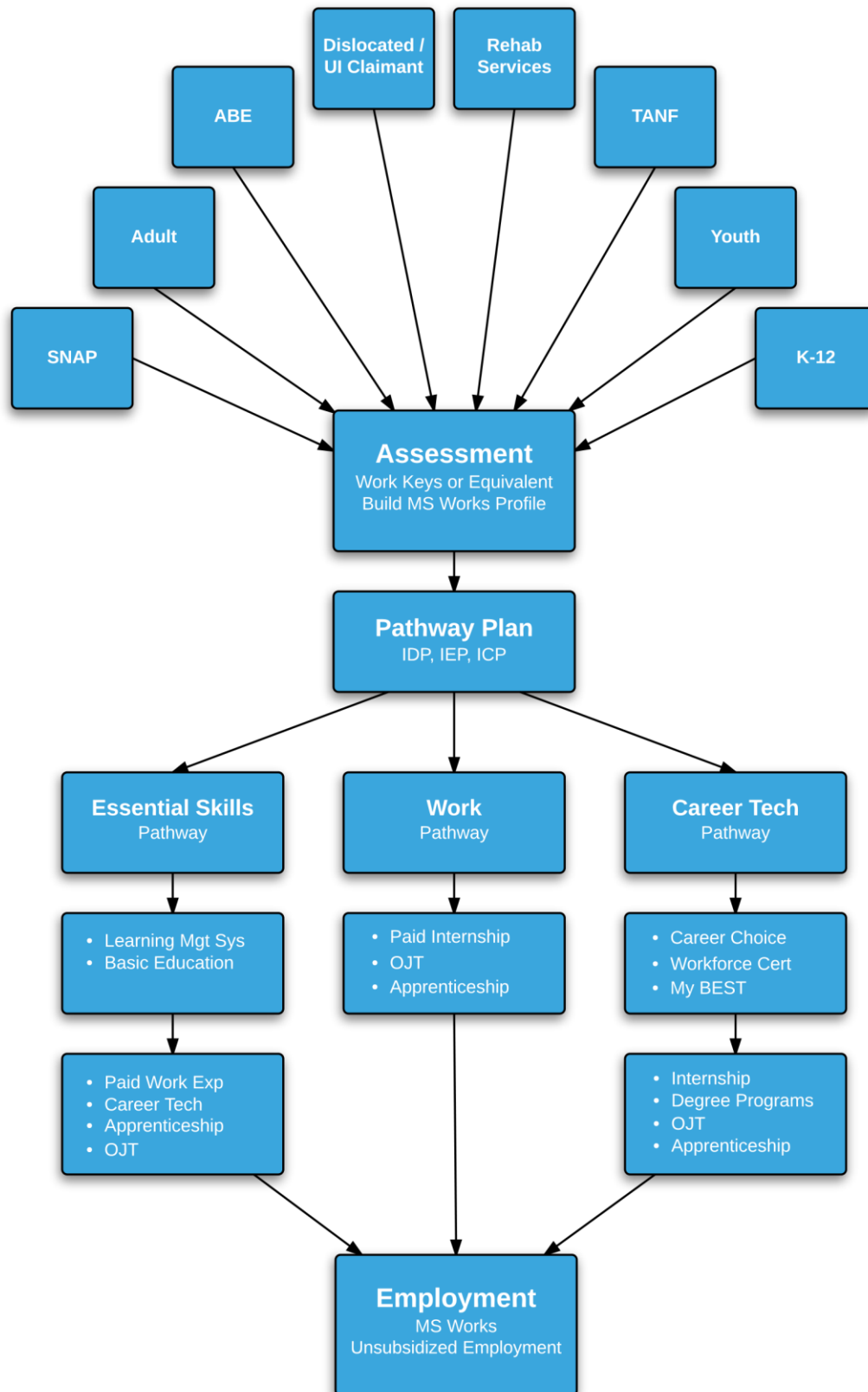


Figure 1: Statewide Pathway Model

Public Forum

The first public forum of the WIOA plan was held Friday, June 26 in the Central High School Auditorium of the Mississippi Department of Education. SWIB Chairman Jay Moon gave an overview of the workforce development needs study that the task force developed for the legislature in February of 2015. Dr. Mimmo Parisi addressed the comments surrounding the task force study and the technology that is in place to propel Mississippi to the next level. SWIB Executive Director James Williams explained the WIOA committees and workgroups governance structure while SWIB Senior Policy Analyst Yolanda Boone outlined the WIOA plan development process. Several public comments were given and there was a very positive and transparent dialogue that rounded out the discussion of how Mississippi's will align its workforce system going forward.



SWIB Senior Policy Analyst Yolanda Boone gives an update on the WIOA Plan Development.

Timeline

Performance and Accountability Workgroup

Tuesday, June 30 – 10:00 AM at CAVS Extension, 153 Mississippi Parkway Canton, MS

Sector Strategies Workgroup

Tuesday, June 30 - 1:30 PM at CAVS Extension, 153 Mississippi Parkway Canton, MS

Business Focus Group

Wednesday, July 8 – 10:00 AM at Mississippi Department of Information Technology 3771 Eastwood Drive Jackson, MS

SWIB Meeting and 2nd Public Forum

Wednesday, July 22 – 5:30 PM at Mississippi Department of Education Central High School Auditorium 359 North West Street Jackson, MS

SWIB Meeting and 3rd Public Forum

Friday, August 14 – 10:00 AM at the Jackson Convention Complex 105 E. Pascagoula Street Jackson, MS

**In addition, WIOA Planning Meetings are held every Friday at 10:00 AM at NSPARC on the campus of Mississippi State University.*

Contact

For more information, visit the WIOA tab on our web site at <http://swib.ms.gov/>

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